

October 18, 1961

I know that you will wish to know whether I have any comments on Chairman Khrushchev's speech of yesterday. Let me say that I have not yet received the full text in translation and would not wish to characterize it in general terms. Further, in a speech of this character, the excerpts which are received early might be affected by additional material which would be in the complete text. From the portions which I have seen it is clear that Chairman Khrushchev ranged widely over the field of foreign affairs and said a good many things which could not be supported by the record. *which is the case*

it would  
be hard  
to support?

Today, however, I would comment on one or two specific matters.

At one point he said:

"If the Western Powers show readiness to settle the German problem, then the question of the time of signing a German peace treaty will not be of such importance. We shall then not insist that the peace treaty be signed without fail by 31 December 1961."

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This confirms publicly what has been said in private talks, including our talks with Mr. Gromyko. His public statement, indicating that he does not assert an ultimatum with respect to time, may serve to reduce tension somewhat. But his general observations about the German and Berlin problems show little if any change from what has been said before. He did not go into details, but one would not expect him to in a general review of this character.

Our discussions in recent weeks with the Soviet Union are properly called exploratory talks. They have not been negotiations, but an attempt to discover whether a basis for negotiation exists. In this process we have kept our allies fully informed, both through the Ambassadorial group in Washington and in NATO.

When a serious and dangerous difference arises, there are various ways of dealing with it. One would be for the two sides to growl publicly at each other until something happens. Another is to establish contact in order to clarify the situation and to guard against a catastrophe which might be brought on by ignorance, miscalculation or mistake. In the modern world I believe that it is important that great powers not lose contact with each other in the presence of a severe disagreement. Exploratory talks can clarify an understanding of vital

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issues and our determination to defend them. They can also discover whether there is any basis for negotiations which might lead to a peaceful conclusion. We believe that responsible statesmen must keep in touch with each other - not despite the difficulties and dangers, but because of them.

If systematic negotiation can occur at some point, that does not insure that an agreement can be reached. The object would be to reach an agreement which fully protects the legitimate vital interests of both sides. But since governments have, not unexpectedly, different *are far apart* views as to what these interests are, negotiation does ~~not~~ *often* always succeed.

There has been considerable speculation about differences among the Western Allies with respect to the handling of the problem of Germany and Berlin. I do not wish to pretend that there have not been differences, but it is important for us to know, and for Mr. Khrushchev to know, what these do and do not mean. There is complete agreement in the West on the nature of our vital interests in Germany and Berlin and on the necessity for defending those vital interests. There is general agreement on the need for preparations to meet a severe crisis if one develops. There has been some disagreement on the timing and nature of contacts with

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the Soviet Union; these have more to do with procedure than with substance. It would not be correct, and certainly would not be helpful, to believe that there is any crisis within the West with respect to Germany and Berlin. Consultations among the Four Powers most directly involved in Germany and Berlin continue on a daily basis, and on a regular basis in NATO. Whether a particular group of experts meets in a particular place, or whether tentative arrangements for such a meeting do not materialize, is not as important as the basic unity on which we are proceeding and the regular consultations which are going forward.